United Nations S/PV.4438

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4438th meeting

Friday, 14 December 2001, 10.55 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ouane	(Mali)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Ahmad
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Tunisia	Mr. Mejdoub
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchinsky
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Letter dated 13 December 2001 from the Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/1191).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

01-70031 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Letter dated 13 December 2001 from the Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/1191)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Egypt, Israel, Malaysia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Africa, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) and Mr. Jacob (Israel) took seats reserved for them at the Council table; Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium), Mr. Fonseca (Brazil), Mr. Heinbecker (Canada), Mr. Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba), Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia) and Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran) took seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter a letter dated 14 December 2001 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2001/1205, and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council to be held today, Friday, 14 December 2001, regarding the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) took a seat reserved for him at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 14 December 2001 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to request that I be invited to participate in the debate on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council."

On previous occasions, the Security Council has extended invitations to representatives of other United Nations bodies in connection with the consideration of the matters on its agenda. In accordance with past practice in this matter, I propose that the Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Fall (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, took a seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in response to the request dated 13 December 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, document S/2001/1191.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/2001/1199, which contains the text of draft resolution submitted by Egypt and Tunisia.

I now call on the representative of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the Council this month. I thank you for your work, and I am grateful to the Permanent Representative of Jamaica, Ambassador Patricia Durrant, for her leadership last month.

The Government of Ariel Sharon announced last Wednesday that it would sever all contact with the Palestinian Authority and its elected leader, President Yasser Arafat. This decision means the abandonment of the negotiation process. It appears to be a prelude to the abandonment of all existing arrangements between the two sides. The Israeli Government has thus begun to take official and public measures to prevent a final settlement and revert the conflict between the two sides to the era before the Oslo accords instead of resolving the conflict and establishing peace in the region.

Despite the immense danger posed by such measures which portend widespread confrontation that could plunge the entire region into war, it would be difficult to say that this came as a complete surprise. It was obvious from the first day that Mr. Sharon and his Government came to power that they were going in that direction. Mr. Sharon has declared on more than one occasion that he does not want a final settlement, and that he wants only an agreement on a cessation of hostilities. Also, Mr. Sharon has repeatedly stated his animosity to the Mitchell Committee and then to its recommendations. In fact, to avoid implementing those recommendations, he concocted the condition of having seven days of quiet — as though a period of quiet would lead to the implementation of the recommendations rather than the implementation of the recommendations leading to a period of quiet, to an end to the violence and to a resumption of the peace process.

Once Mr. Sharon had succeeded in burying the Mitchell recommendations for an extended period and in thwarting any attempt to revive them, he came up with a new declaration: that the Palestinian Authority first had to combat and put an end to terrorism. In the meantime, Israel would continue to assault the Authority and its institutions, including its security apparatus, thus making it impossible for them to function. Most recently, he came up with the announcement that he was boycotting the Palestinian Authority.

Those are the basic political statements of the Israeli Government and its leader, all of them firmly conveying the determination of that Government to continue its confrontation, its violence and its rejection of any attempt to bring about peace.

I regret to have to say here that some have attempted to provide cover for some of those positions, either deliberately or unintentionally, thus encouraging the Israeli Government to continue its destructive policies and its aggression against our people.

For our part, we have repeatedly stated our commitment to existing agreements and our full acceptance of the Mitchell report, and we have called for the comprehensive and speedy implementation of the report's recommendations. Moreover, we have always expressed our readiness to resume the negotiations on the agreed basis, with a view to the rapid achievement of a final settlement and to the establishment of peace. That has been and remains our position. The Israeli Government must stop doubting that position and casting doubt on it. The Israeli Government must also understand that any retreat from mutual recognition and from existing agreements cannot go in one direction only, and that this can only prolong the pain and suffering of both our peoples, and of all the peoples of the region — although our people remain the principal victim.

On the question of terrorism, the Palestinian side has taken a clear stand against international terrorism and against terrorist groups with a global dimension. The Palestinian side joined the international consensus on this issue following the September disaster in the United States. In line with that clear position — as well as prior to those events — we have also rejected suicide bombings carried out in Israel targeting Israeli civilians. We condemn them as terrorist acts, and we view them as incompatible with Palestinian commitments and as acts that harm the national interests of the Palestinian people. That position remains clear and fair, in spite of all the crimes and all the State terrorism perpetrated against our people by official Israel — not just by Israeli groups or organizations. I shall return later to this question.

Despite our clear position, the ability of the Palestinians to confront and put an end to that

phenomenon depends, first and foremost, on the capabilities of the security apparatus, including its freedom of movement. And secondly, and perhaps more important, it depends on a halt to the suffering of the Palestinian people and on the restoration of their hope and belief that the process of negotiations will actually lead to an end to occupation and to the establishment of peace.

Regrettably, the present Israeli Government has persistently worked to destroy both of those requirements. It has violently assaulted the Palestinian security apparatus, virtually preventing it from functioning. At the same time, it has continued to impose its siege and closures, causing the suffocation, destruction and killing of our people. It has persisted in sending the message that there is no hope of a final settlement or of peace.

Let me speak now of acts of violence committed in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. We do not support or condone such acts, because we are trying to reach a peaceful negotiated solution. Moreover, we affirm that those acts are incompatible with our commitments, including our commitment to the ceasefire. But we absolutely do not accept any attempt to label those acts as terrorist acts. Over the years, resistance to foreign occupation has been, and it remains, a legitimate right under international law and international humanitarian law. In the Palestinian case, there are no protected Israeli civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Israeli settlers are there illegally, and were sent in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and of the first Protocol Additional to the Conventions. They came to colonize Palestinian lands and thus to deny the rights and the existence of our people. I would add that most of the settlers are armed, which makes them illegal combatants or members of militias. Over the years, they have terrorized and attacked Palestinian civilians. One example was the massacre committed by a settler at Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi at Hebron.

I speak of this because some parties seem to be trying to lend legitimacy to the presence of the settlers. The Israeli settlers will remain illegal until they depart with the end of the occupation of our land.

Recently, Israel, the occupying Power, viciously escalated its bloody military campaign against our people and against the Palestinian Authority. It has made intensive use of F-16 warplanes, helicopter gunships, tanks and other weaponry. It has re-occupied some areas that are under full Palestinian control; it has tightened its siege of Palestinian cities and has destroyed many Palestinian institutions and symbols of the Authority, including important facilities such as the Gaza international airport and the Voice of Palestine radio station.

All of this, of course, has been accompanied by significant loss of life and by widespread fear and terror among Palestinian civilians. Today the Israeli forces of occupation killed at least eight Palestinians; yesterday they killed another six. Regrettably, we heard nothing from the circles that had spoken out before under different circumstances. Prior to this escalation, the Israeli campaign had not ceased since the infamous visit of Ariel Sharon to Al-Haram al-Sharif on 28 September 2000. Since then, Israeli forces of occupation have killed more than 800 Palestinians, in addition to the hundreds of Palestinian who have been martyred by the occupation in different ways, such as through preventing the movement of ambulances. Israeli forces of occupation have also injured approximately 30,000 Palestinians, many of whom have been permanently disabled, and have caused tremendous suffering among all Palestinians.

The occupying forces have committed deliberate killings, and Israel — the occupying Power — has adopted an official policy of extra-judicial executions. Israel has also caused the widespread destruction of private and public property, including economic institutions; the uprooting of thousands of trees; and the despoiling of agricultural land. All of these actions represent serious breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The occupying Power has also committed other serious violations of the Convention, including the imposition of severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods and the imposition of closure and of collective punishment.

We should also refer here to the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, which was reconvened on 5 December and unanimously adopted an extremely important declaration calling on the occupying Power, inter alia, immediately to cease committing grave breaches of the Convention, including any of the acts mentioned in article 147, and to refrain from any other violations of the Convention.

Regrettably, Israel has continued and escalated these violations. On the basis of the clear provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and its first Additional Protocol, we charge the Government of Mr. Ariel Sharon, the Government of the occupying Power, with war crimes committed against the Palestinian people, pursuant to the official policies of that Government. Further, we hold it responsible for all other war crimes committed by members of the occupying army and by Israeli settlers, in accordance with article 29 of the Convention.

The responsibilities of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention are very clear, as defined in common article 1 and article 148. The responsibilities of the Security Council are also clear.

We also charge Israel, the occupying Power, with carrying out State terrorism against our people. It has engaged in the killing of civilians and in the vast destruction of property, with the aim of instilling fear and terror in the population and forcing it to submit to its political will.

The responsibility of the international community is perfectly clear, as are the responsibilities of the Security Council, particularly in the light of the campaign against international terrorism. The peoples of our region, as are many throughout the world, are looking to see how the international community deals with this grave and tragic matter.

In any case, the Israeli occupation of our land and our people remains the main problem and the source of all of these disastrous events. The only solution to the situation is an end to the occupation and the realization of the rights of our people, including the establishment of an independent state, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Only the realization of the rights of the Palestinians and coexistence between the two States of Palestine and Israel will bring security, stability and peace for both sides and for the region.

In this regard, we would like to express our appreciation for what was stated by President George Bush before the General Assembly as well as the statement made by Secretary of State Colin Powell on 19 November with regard to the Middle East. We accept the content of that statement as a basis for moving forward, with regard both to dealing with the current situation on the ground and to the final settlement between the two sides.

We also express our appreciation for the envoys sent by certain concerned parties, including the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union, the United Nations Secretary-General, and, of course, to all of our friends, including the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement, for their principled and continuous support.

The Security Council has convened today to consider the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and to attempt to take the necessary action in this regard. There is no doubt that, tragically, this step is extremely late in coming, due in particular to the Council's inability to take any action since the adoption of resolution 1322 (2000) on 7 October 2000, even if only to follow up on the implementation of the resolution. No one can deny that the Council's inability to act in this regard has had a major impact on its credibility and possibly affected its ability to take action in other areas.

The important question here — one that is relevant to international relations as a whole and perhaps even to the future of the Organization — is whether the Council is being used by some only when it suits them, or whether it is representative, acting on behalf of all of the members of the international community, and is actually responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Today, regrettably, it appears that the Security Council will be prevented once again from assuming its responsibilities under the Charter because of the negative stance of one of its members. But at least a serious attempt was made by the members to deal with this grave situation. We appreciate this attempt.

We wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to all of those members of the Security Council who have expressed their support for the draft resolution, and we wish also to thank our Arab brothers who asked for this meeting, co-sponsored the draft resolution and presented it to the Council — particularly Tunisia, the Arab member of the Security Council, and Egypt, the Chairman of the Arab Group for this month.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the observer of Palestine for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Egypt, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) *(spoke in Arabic)*: At the outset, Mr. President, let me thank you for convening this meeting.

As Chairman of the Arab Group for this month, I should like to touch on the following points with regard to the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

First, the fundamental reason for the tension, violence, destruction and provocation is the Israeli military occupation. As the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Colin Powell, said on 19 November, this occupation must come to an end. The Security Council and the international community must understand this logic and the objective that we all aim to achieve. We are confident that all of the members of the Council will realize this truth and appreciate it fully.

Secondly, the draft resolution before the Council requires that both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides take the necessary measures to put an end to the violence, provocation and destruction. It calls upon them to implement the recommendations of the Mitchell report, to which they have both agreed.

The international community — including in particular the United States — has stated that the report clearly shows the need to return to political negotiations. We are aware that Israel uses a variety of pretexts to avoid resuming the political dialogue or going back to the negotiating table. For that reason, we are looking to the Security Council to reaffirm that the implementation of these recommendations, including a complete halt to the Israeli settlements, represents the only real way out of the current crisis and that it would open the way for genuine, sincere and serious negotiations leading to a just and lasting settlement that would take into consideration the interests of both sides and resolve all of the elements of the problem.

This would result, first, of all, in the establishment of an independent, viable, functioning Palestinian State on all the territory of the West Bank and Gaza, with its capital in East Jerusalem. It would also mean equal security for both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and secure relations of good-neighbourliness and cooperation between both States, Palestinian and Israeli, thereby opening the way to a new Middle East.

Thirdly, there can be absolutely no doubt that targeting and killing civilians, whether Israeli or Palestinian, is deplorable, and must be condemned forcefully. At the same time, if we want to ensure true balance, political assassinations and aerial bombardments, the destruction of houses and installations and blockades and economic suffocation should be condemned just as forcefully. Indeed, such actions lead to greater tension and confrontation and result in prompt counter-operations by the Palestinian people, who resist the forces of occupation and reject all settlement activities that aim to deprive them of their territory.

Fourthly, the urgent mission of the international community, particularly the Security Council, which, since the beginning of the crisis, has been unable to adopt a real, critical position with regard to the deteriorating situation, must be to help the two parties to control the situation and to stop the violence, destruction and provocation. In essence, the draft resolution before the Council clearly contains that message, and we hope that all countries will support it.

Fifthly, in their meeting on 5 December, the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention drew up a list of the responsibilities that Israel, as an occupying Power, has towards the Palestinian civilians living under occupation. The final document provides for the obligation of the two parties to guarantee the security and protection of the people under occupation. We believe that the recommendations of that important conference would, if implemented, represent a positive qualitative step to protect the Palestinian people and reduce tension and violence until a final political settlement of the Palestinian question can be achieved.

Destruction of the installations of the Palestinian Authority will not end the crisis or reduce the level of violence between the two parties. The opposite is probably true. The Israeli talk about liquidating or eliminating Palestinian leaders, or cutting off contacts with them, only signifies a desire to prolong the conflict and change the basic facts — indeed, perhaps it even represents a complete renunciation of all agreements signed by the two parties, as a prelude to a new phase of the conflict. This is a very dangerous and serious gamble, which could destroy the hopes for peace and stability in our region for years to come.

In this light, we once again call upon the members of the Council to show an understanding of the points that in our view are essential. Were the Council to fail to effectively assume its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security or to contain the volatile situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, we fear that, given the inability of the other parties to achieve concrete progress in prevailing upon the Israeli Government to accept steps that would lead to a political solution, the situation would become yet more tense and would get completely out of control, having a very negative impact on the stability of this vital part of our world.

Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): It is of the greatest importance that the Council today, in this public and open debate, is addressing the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. This is not simply another meeting of the Council on the question; it is a meeting that is taking place at a critical moment characterized by a serious deterioration in the situation on the ground in the occupied territories and in relations between Palestinians and Israelis. In fact, we are witnessing a deterioration unprecedented since the Oslo agreements. Today, instead of a peace process between Palestinians and Israelis, we are witnessing a process of war that is causing enormous damage and may engulf the region in flames.

It is appropriate to recall today that, against the backdrop of an Israeli occupation that has continued for several decades, the Government of Ariel Sharon initiated a systematic policy of aggression against the Palestinian people, destroying their property, imposing economic blockades on their towns and villages and collective punishment through the repeated use of excessive and sustained force with all the weapons in the Israeli arsenal, and using force on a daily basis against unarmed Palestinian civilians.

The path chosen by the Government of Mr. Sharon has undone all that has been accomplished over the past 10 years. His policy of calling into question commitments and obligations undertaken by Israeli in agreements concluded with the Palestinians is a source of concern and conflict. There is no doubt that since he took power, Mr. Sharon has, unfortunately, turned his back on peace efforts and on the peace process that provided the framework and was the agreed way to advance peace.

The worst thing about this situation is that Mr. Sharon has now moved on to what could be called Act II of his destructive enterprise: his methodical policy of ruthlessness and destruction of everything that symbolizes the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli Government's decision to cut off all contact with President Arafat is the clearest example of this.

Since the concept of the right to a Palestinian State has finally, at long last, been recognized by the entire international community — I am referring, I am sure the Council will understand, to the recent statements made by President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell — Prime Minister Sharon has now opted to undermine everything symbolic of this State in order to keep it from being reborn and from existing. The Israeli Prime Minister's enterprise is also aimed at undermining the very notion of the peace process.

Clearly, it is urgent for the international community, and in particular for the Security Council, to take determined and resolute action to stop this serious deterioration in the situation as soon as possible so that at this late stage, we can be spared a further explosion, which, as we all know, will serve neither peace nor security for either of the parties concerned.

The situation is clear. There is an Israeli occupation, recognized and designated as such by Security Council resolutions. This occupation, which has pushed the frustrations of the Palestinians to their ultimate limits, must end. The appropriate way to end these misfortunes is through a negotiated settlement, arrived at through negotiations between the two parties within the framework of the peace process. This is the only way that peace can be restored. In 2000 both parties had taken a step towards that objective. They must return to the path of negotiation.

The policy of the Israeli Government is the very denial of peace. One cannot carry out daily physical aggression against an entire people, and aggression against their rights, and at the same time forbid them to demand what is rightly theirs. This is where the central problem in the Palestinian issue lies. It is high time for this situation to change and for the Palestinian people, like other peoples in the region, to exercise their right to freedom and dignity in an independent State with Al Quds as its capital.

For a year the Security Council has faced a pressing demand for action to break the deadlock and

encourage momentum for a return to the peace negotiations. Clearly, that momentum has not been generated by the parties themselves. Support from the international community is required to that end, and it is the Security Council and the United Nations that all are looking to today. In the course of numerous previous exercises, the Council has been unable to play its rightful role. It is high time for it to be able to play that role for the sake of peace and stability in the region. The Council cannot allow itself to ignore what is taking place in Palestine. Its course of action is to support the efforts carried out by various international actors.

Tunisia, a moderate peace- and justice-loving country that has supported the peace process since it began in Madrid, today renews this appeal to the Council to act without delay.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): Let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, for holding this open meeting at such short notice.

Mauritius has supported the Arab Group's request that the Security Council consider the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, because we believe that the United Nations, especially the Security Council, has a permanent responsibility over the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects. Resolution 181 (II) of 1947 and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), among others, have laid the groundwork for its continued involvement in the search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

The Security Council has the Charter responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and it cannot afford to continue to remain a passive bystander while the situation in the Middle East continues to deteriorate. In fact, the current situation has reached the most dangerous and critical stage since the signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1993. A continued paralysis of the Council over the Middle East issue is unacceptable and would be unforgivable. The Council should act, and it should act now. If appropriate steps are not taken immediately, we run the risk of seeing the entire Middle East embroiled in a full-scale war. No one wishes this to happen.

Since the September 2000 visit by Mr. Sharon to the holy site of Al-Haram al-Sharif, which triggered the second intifada, there has been unprecedented violence, casualties and loss of civilian lives on the ground. Over the past year, as the result of harsh economic blockades imposed by Israel, we have witnessed the occupation of Palestinian offices, including that of Orient House, by the Israeli forces. The extrajudicial killings of Palestinian activists and political leaders, followed by frequent Israeli incursions into areas under full Palestinian control, have only added more fuel to the explosive situation in the Middle East. Likewise, the suicide attacks by Palestinians, in which Israeli civilians have become victims, have certainly not helped, and Mauritius strongly condemns such attacks. Once again, we call on both sides to exercise restraint.

We have now come to a most frightening and dangerous stage in the Middle East crisis, with the announcement by the Israeli Government that it has severed all ties with the Palestinian leadership; to make matters worse, it has put the Palestinian leader almost in a state of siege. We totally reject any attempt to sideline Chairman Arafat, who remains the only viable Palestinian interlocutor and partner for peace. We are relieved that the rest of the world has reacted promptly to the decision announced by the Israeli Government. Let us all make no mistake: any move to undermine Chairman Arafat will bring more chaos to the region and the resurgence and possible legitimization of militant extremist groups which have only contributed to the derailing and undermining of the peace process.

We see great wisdom in the statement made today by the Belgian Foreign Minister that Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority are the only addresses that Israel needs as a partner for peace. We also welcome the position of the United States that it will continue to work with the Palestinian leadership, and we would request all sponsors and facilitators of the peace process to remain actively engaged with a view to narrowing the differences between the two sides.

All the same, we should acknowledge the fact that despite all their efforts, the protagonists on the ground have not been successful in stopping the cycle of violence. The situation in the Middle East is ablaze and none of the protagonists seems to be capable of putting out the fire. It is therefore incumbent upon the United Nations to take the lead and a proactive approach in stemming the violence.

Mauritius supports the Arab Group-Tunisian draft resolution, which demands the immediate cessation of all acts of violence, while calling for the

implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell report and the resumption of negotiations between the two sides. It is also imperative that a monitoring mechanism be established that would help the two parties implement the recommendations of the Mitchell report and address the issue of the safety of Palestinian civilians. We will all recall that, since November last year, the non-aligned caucus of the Security Council has relentlessly undertaken efforts to move the Council to establish a United Nations observer force to provide protection to the people in the Middle East. The stalemate and chaos on the ground only strengthen our conviction that, had the Council agreed to deploy such an observer force, the situation would not be as it is today.

It is imperative that the political leaders return without further delay and without preconditions to the negotiating table and devise means for the unconditional implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell report. That report, which has been accepted by both sides, remains the only viable option for laying the groundwork for the resumption of the peace process.

Mauritius unequivocally condemns all acts of terrorism, violence and targeted assassinations, which have claimed an untold number of civilian victims. It is beyond anyone's comprehension that, while the Security Council considers such issues as the prevention of armed conflict and the protection of civilians in armed conflict, it is at the same time prevented from taking action to protect civilians in the Middle East, who are already subject to gross injustice by the occupying Power. There should be no double standards from this Council.

This afternoon, when Council members were briefed by Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi on his engagement in the search for a solution to the problem of setting up a provisional Government in Kabul, his achievement was referred to as a case of classic success of United Nations leadership. We sincerely hope that the United Nations and the Security Council this evening will be able to show the same leadership as we consider the issue of the Middle East and the question of Palestine.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is deeply concerned by the escalating violence in the region and the resulting deaths of so many innocent civilians on both sides. Terrorist targeting of civilians, particularly, is beyond contempt. Violence will result in nothing but more violence; it serves only the interests of those on either side who do not want peace.

Both communities have seen too many funerals. It is way beyond time for Israel and the Palestinian Authority to be thinking hard about where further violence will lead and to be acting wisely and with restraint. The only way forward is a cessation of violence and dialogue. Tenet and Mitchell show the way. It means a resumption of the political process leading to a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of this long-standing dispute based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

The United Kingdom is committed to a settlement in the Middle East that provides security for Israel within recognized borders and allows the emergence of a viable Palestinian State. This can be achieved only through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority which President Arafat heads. He is the elected representative of the Palestinian people and the key Palestinian leader with whom Israel can negotiate peace when the time is right. It serves no one's interest to undermine President Arafat or to weaken the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian Authority has responsibilities. As a first step, it must dismantle the Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorist networks. We again urge the Palestinian Authority to crack down on the terrorists who are using the Palestinian areas to launch attacks. They should be arrested and brought to justice. We welcome President Arafat's reported decision to take such action. These commitments must be turned into reality.

Israel has a right to security and is entitled to take steps to protect itself from terrorist attack, but it should ensure that its actions remain proportionate and avoid civilian casualties. As the European Union is making perfectly clear this week at the highest level, Israel must at once withdraw its military forces and stop extrajudicial executions.

We urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority to pull back from the brink and work together to end violence, implement the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee and return to negotiations. We also urge them to work with United States envoy Zinni to achieve this.

The United Kingdom will abstain in the voting on the text in front of us because it does not reflect the realities on the ground; does not specify one essential next step for a resumption of meaningful negotiations; and does not, as the European Union has done, define the responsibilities which both sides must accept to end the violence threatening the lives of civilians in the region on a daily basis.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): Ukraine is deeply concerned over the situation in the region, which has now reached a most critical point. Dramatically escalating since September 2000, it burst into the wide-scale confrontation that has claimed the lives of hundreds of people on both sides. It is particularly disturbing that the new outbreaks of violence in the Palestinian territories and within Israel almost every day claim numerous additional victims and increasingly aggravate the situation in the entire region. We have been shocked by the series of recent bloody acts of violence, which have shattered the slim hopes for the resumption of peace negotiations between the parties.

The current situation requires urgent steps to be undertaken. Ukraine calls on the parties to the conflict to take resolute and immediate actions to achieve a ceasefire, to stop the bloodshed, to prevent a further escalation of violence and to create the necessary preconditions for returning to the negotiating table. At this crucial stage, both the Israelis and Palestinian leaders have to display courage, flexibility and realism. The two parties have to refrain from any unilateral actions that might lead to further complications or prejudge the outcome of the final status talks.

Ukraine categorically rejects any act of terrorism as a means of reaching political goals, regardless of who commits it or for what reason. We call on the Palestinian leadership to take urgent and decisive steps to ensure that effective control be exercised over the radical elements, to stop the abhorrent practice of suicide bombings and terrorist attacks and to reduce incitements and provocations against the Israelis.

There can be no excuse for the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians or for the reoccupation of the Palestinian-controlled territories. It is our firm conviction that the practice of extrajudicial killings and devastating raids into the Palestinian-controlled territories must stop. Any settlement activities of Israel on the Palestinian territories, as well as closures and economic sanctions against the Palestinians, should also be stopped.

We believe that the recommendations of the Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee and Tenet work plan constitute a solid basis for finding the way out of the ongoing crisis in the Middle East. Full and immediate implementation by the parties of the steps envisaged therein would provide an impetus to bring the violence to an end, restore mutual trust and confidence and create necessary conditions for the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiation process. In order to achieve a lasting solution, this process should be based on relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the principle of land for peace, as well as other principles laid down at the Madrid Conference and in the Oslo Agreements.

Peace in the Middle East can be achieved only through negotiations aimed at both the establishment of a viable Palestinian State and ensuring the right of Israel to live within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Ukraine welcomes the efforts of the representatives of the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union in the region and the United Nations Special Coordinator, as well as the position statements made recently by United States President George Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell. Much to our regret, these efforts have not yet stopped the violence.

Ukraine favours a more active role for the Security Council, which is entrusted with the primary responsibility for international peace and security, in searching for ways to resolve the current Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. Ukraine stands ready to continue making a practical contribution to complement the international diplomatic efforts under way. In this context, I would like to mention that Ukraine has recently offered the Israeli and Palestinian parties its good offices, offering to provide the venue for the resumed negotiations on its territory at any appropriate time.

Finally, I would like to express our fervent hope that through the joint efforts of the two parties, assisted by the international community, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be ultimately resolved so that peace will return to the entire Middle East region and the peoples of Palestine and Israel will enjoy living side by side in

their own countries, secure in peace, prosperity and dignity. Ukraine remains fully committed to helping them achieve this long-sought goal.

Mr. Negroponte (United States): The United States shares the grave concern of all of us about the situation in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. We grieve to see the extent of suffering and civilian casualties on both sides, particularly the many innocent children.

Secretary of State Powell, in his Louisville speech on 19 November, laid out a vision of a region where Israelis and Arabs live together in peace, security and dignity, where two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders. That vision remains valid, and my Government is committed to doing all it can to make this vision a reality.

No one is working harder than we are to end the terror, violence and suffering that has afflicted the Israeli and Palestinian people for far too long. We are engaged with the parties on the ground, and we will remain engaged. We are committed to helping the parties end the violence and move towards implementation of the Mitchell Committee recommendations. We encourage others to support diplomatic efforts in the region to this end. Our focus should be on working with the parties on the ground to help them stop the terror and violence and on establishing a ceasefire.

The question before us today is whether the draft resolution under consideration here in the Security Council can make a meaningful contribution to improving the situation in the Middle East. Unfortunately, the draft resolution before us fails to address the dynamic at work in the region. Instead, its purpose is to isolate politically one of the parties to the conflict through an attempt to throw the weight of the Council behind the other party.

One of the fundamental flaws of this draft resolution is that it never mentions the recent acts of terrorism against Israelis or those responsible for them. The dynamic at work between the Israelis and the Palestinians is abundantly clear: terrorist organizations such as Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad are deliberately — and brutally — seeking to sabotage any potential there may be for Israelis and Palestinians to conclude a negotiated peace. Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terrorists simply do not want to see a negotiated peace.

It is President Arafat's responsibility, as leader of the Palestinian Authority, to take a strategic stand now against terrorism. There can be no coexistence with terrorist organizations or acquiescence in their activities. The Palestinian Authority, using all necessary means and with absolutely no further delay, must arrest those responsible for planning and carrying out terrorist attacks and destroy the formal and informal structures that perpetuate terrorism.

Israel, for its part, must focus very carefully on the repercussions of any actions it takes. Neither party should lose sight of the need to resume progress towards a lasting end to the violence and resumption of a dialogue. Both must consider the consequences of their actions and make decisions that facilitate such progress. There will be a tomorrow and a day after tomorrow, and both sides must find a way to move forward together.

We believe that the Security Council should not take an action that will turn the parties away from the efforts needed to improve an already extremely tense situation. It is with regret that the United States has decided to make use of its veto to block this draft resolution.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): My delegation thanks you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Recent events in the Palestinian occupied territories and in Israel and the resulting loss of innocent lives have proven to be more tragic than anyone could have imagined. The situation has now reached desperate proportions and clearly constitutes a threat to the stability of the region and international peace and security. These events are taking place in the context of a world changed by the events of 11 September and the resulting renewed vigour of the international community in the search for global peace.

My delegation is therefore disheartened that in relation to the situation in the Middle East, the Security Council has failed to take any formal action since September 2000. At that time, in resolution 1322 (2000), the Council called, inter alia, for the immediate cessation of violence and for all steps to be taken to ensure that the cycle of violence was brought to an end. The Council also committed itself to fully supporting the role of the Secretary-General in facilitating the peace process, and we wish to express our appreciation

to the Secretary-General for his continued efforts to bring peace to the region through the use of his good offices.

We also take the opportunity to express our appreciation to those countries and organizations which have sought to play a mediating role. But as the situation continues to deteriorate, it is crucial for the Security Council to carry out its Charter responsibilities. We must continue to encourage the parties to move from the brink of total chaos back to the negotiating table. It is my delegation's firm conviction that it is the Security Council's responsibility — indeed, its duty — to be engaged on this issue, and that the international community expects no less from the Council in keeping with its mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The provisions of the Sharm El-Sheikh agreement and the recommendations of the Mitchell report remain the best basis on which to move the peace process forward. In this regard, the parties should immediately take steps towards implementing their commitments on the basis of their previous agreements. We also support the call for the establishment of a monitoring mechanism, as it would serve the interests of the parties in their implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell report and help to create a better situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We continue to support the sending of an observer force to the Palestinian territories. We still believe that the deployment of such a force could act as a deterrent to further violence and serve as a confidence-building measure between the parties.

Jamaica reiterates its unqualified support for efforts to achieve a just and lasting settlement within the framework of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and based on the principle of land for peace. Action by the Security Council will clearly demonstrate our resolve to assist in the peace process. The draft resolution presented to us by Egypt and Tunisia, inter alia, demands the immediate cessation of all acts of violence, provocation and destruction, as well as the return to the positions and arrangements which existed prior to September 2000. It also condemns all acts of terror, in particular those targeting civilians, and condemns all acts of extrajudiciary executions, excessive use of force and wide destruction of properties.

In this context, Jamaica fully supports the draft resolution contained in document S/2001/1199 and will vote in favour of its adoption.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): The hour is late. We will be brief. On the Middle East issue, it is clearly very difficult to get consensus or unanimity within the Security Council. But we believe that there is total consensus today on one point: the situation in the Middle East is dangerous and getting more dangerous. No one can challenge this simple, indisputable fact. When such major threats to international peace and security surface, only one — we repeat, only one — organization has been assigned the primary responsibility to handle them. No other organ has this constitutional responsibility. Therefore, we in the Security Council have to seize this responsibility because the responsibility is ours. When we do not, the situation often gets worse. This is what we have seen happening in the Middle East.

In the past few months, Singapore has been deeply disturbed by the senseless loss of innocent lives following the escalation of violence. It is truly horrifying to wake up each morning to see more pictures of innocent civilians being targeted and killed. We share the Secretary-General's view that the targeting of innocent civilians is unacceptable, and we are pleased that in the debate, in all the statements we have heard so far, there is complete unanimity that this targeting of innocent civilians must be brought to an end. The tragedy here is that these attacks are taking place at a time when there has actually been increased international action and attention to re-engage the parties and to end the violence.

Our humble view is that we should not provide the extremists with a veto on the resumption of the peace process. All sides should be called upon to exercise maximum restraint and not allow these extremists to drive the agenda. All parties should immediately rejoin the Middle East peace process. Fortunately for the Council, the path to peace has been comprehensively laid down by the report of the Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, the Mitchell report. It is remarkable that this report has been supported by both parties — indeed, by the entire international community. Hence, we believe that immediate steps should be taken to implement the Mitchell report.

In the Middle East, ultimately, there is no alternative to a negotiated peace settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In our view, now more than ever, the international efforts of mediation and facilitation, including those of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations, as well as those of other key regional players, should be redoubled. We believe that by acting together, the international community can best succeed in its endeavours to fight against terrorism and to bring peace to the Middle East. We hope that sometime soon the international community will come together again and speak with one voice.

Mr. Lavrov (Russia) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia, like the whole international community, is alarmed by the dangerously explosive dynamic of recent developments in the relations between Palestinians and the Israeli population. This can have a very negative impact on the overall situation in the Middle East. We decisively condemn the terrorist actions and the raids of extremist organizations against civilian populations in Israel. This only results in discrediting the legitimate claims of the Palestinian people to exercise its national rights. It undermines any attempts to change the course of events and revert to a political settlement, and impedes the possibility of resuming a peaceful Arab-Israeli dialogue. This is why we believe that the leadership of the Palestine Authority, and Yasser Arafat personally, should take very energetic and harsh measures to put an end to the violence on the part of the Palestinian extremists; they should arrest and punish the terrorists and dismantle their infrastructure.

At the same time, we are convinced that it is not through the use of force that a solution to the problems of Israeli-Palestinian relations will be found. That is not the way out. The status quo is totally untenable, because ultimately there can be a settlement only in political terms. It is against this backdrop that we are convinced that any attempts made by Israel to ensure its security through the use of military force can in no way resolve this urgent problem. On the contrary, this can only lead to renewed acts of vengeance between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

It is not in the interest of Israel to have a de facto destruction of the Palestine Authority. The Israeli leadership cannot question the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to build its own independent State, and therefore cannot question the existence of Palestinian self-government headed by the legitimately recognized leader of the Palestinian people, Yasser Arafat.

This is why the Israeli Government should not undertake any measures that would burn bridges: it should preserve the possibility of a political dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian self-government. In such circumstances, we need concrete steps on both sides to achieve de-escalation of the critical situation and energetic political efforts to get out of the dead end.

Russia, together with the American co-sponsors of the peace process, with the European Union, with the United Nations and within the framework of the quartet of international intermediaries and other concerned parties, will spare no effort to overcome the explosive spiral of recent developments and to revert the process to a political settlement.

The draft resolution that has been presented for the Council's consideration is a balanced one; it decisively condemns terrorism and all other forms of violence; and it calls for the implementation of the Mitchell plan and the resumption of the peace process.

In the light of our well-known position, the Russian Federation will vote in favour of this draft resolution.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We are deeply concerned over the continued escalation of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. In order to put an early end to the bloody conflict, to reduce tension and to salvage the Middle East peace process, which is undergoing a serious crisis, today's Security Council meeting is very necessary.

We strongly condemn the present series of violent attacks against civilians. Israeli military retaliation does not help to mitigate the conflict. Such events, taking place time and again between Israel and Palestine, prove the futility of the eye-for-an-eye policy, for it can only lead to even more violence and further escalation, harming the civilian populations of both sides. We call on the two sides to remain calm in handling the serious situation, to bring to an end the cycle of revenge and counter-revenge and to try to solve the dispute through negotiation.

The Chinese delegation believes that the only way to resolve the question of the Middle East is through the cessation of Israeli military occupation of

Palestinian territories, on the basis of the principle of land for peace; through the implementation of all agreements; and through the restoration of all the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their right to an independent State. We hope that all international conciliation efforts will be based on this. We believe that the Palestinian Authority is a legitimate and necessary party to any peaceful future, and its important role must be adequately safeguarded.

President Arafat has made far-reaching contributions to the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and to progress towards Middle East peace. China supports President Arafat and his Palestinian Authority's continuation of their effort for a solution to the question of Palestine through peaceful negotiations.

Under the present circumstances, the international community's attention should be focused on the Israel-Palestine situation. A speedy and just solution to the question of the Middle East, in particular the question of Palestine, is in the interest of all parties, as well as of regional and international peace and stability. It requires joint efforts in the form of pragmatic assistance on the part of the international community.

Given its primary responsibility for international peace and security, it is incumbent upon the Security Council to make a timely contribution in response to the grave situation and to play an active role in reducing tensions in the Middle East. We believe that the establishment of a monitoring mechanism in areas of conflict is in the interest of both sides.

We also believe that the draft resolution under consideration is balanced. It is a realistic reflection of the present situation. Therefore, the Chinese delegation will vote in favour of it.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) *(spoke in Spanish)*: It was four months ago, in this same Chamber, when we had the Council's last public meeting on the issue before us today. On that occasion, inter alia, we mentioned the following points, which I would like to reiterate this evening.

The Security Council can and must act vis-à-vis the situation in the Middle East, because this is a conflict that undoubtedly represents a real threat to international peace and security. In this way, the Council will be fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to it in the Charter.

In acting, the Council must use the greatest calm and prudence, being careful not to negatively affect a very volatile situation. The Security Council is obligated to create conditions so that violence can come to an end and negotiations can be resumed.

At that time, we reaffirmed that the situation had spiralled into violence, to the benefit of no one. Thus, the excessive use of force, as well as extrajudiciary killings by Israelis and extremist acts committed indiscriminately against civilians, cannot be accepted. We have appealed to the parties to welcome the recommendations of the Mitchell report, and we have supported the diplomatic efforts of high-level envoys on the ground. We said this before, and we reiterate it today: the weakening of the Palestinian Authority will erode the peace process, which will only benefit extremists and the enemies of peace.

It is clear that, after August, serious events have taken place that directly or indirectly affect the situation in the Middle East. On the one hand, the Council has engaged in deeper reflection; yet, on the other, it is necessary for the Council to avoid — on an issue that is so closely related to the events of 11 September — sending erroneous messages to the parties involved in the conflict in the region.

It is also clear that since August the situation has deteriorated to a level that only four months ago we could not even have imagined.

Given all of this, the Security Council now has a role that it must responsibly shoulder, while avoiding greater polarization between the parties, and helping them to seek alternatives to an escalation of violence. We see our work as complementing the efforts by other actors in the international community, including the activities of the Secretary-General. We therefore believe that the Security Council should primarily ensure the full implementation of the recommendations in the Mitchell report, a document that was welcomed by members of this body on 22 May. This can be achieved only if we act in the strength of a solid political consensus among all its members.

Mr. Ahmad (Bangladesh): May I begin by thanking you, Sir, for convening this meeting on the very tragic and deteriorating situation in the Middle East. We gather here today against the sombre backdrop of continued violence in the occupied Palestinian territories. It is taking a heavy toll on

human life and destroying property. Each act of violence pushes back the hope for peace.

Bangladesh strongly condemns the upsurge of attacks on civilian populations. Let me take this opportunity to express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

The persistence of violence has never before done so much damage to the peace process and the agreed basis of negotiation. This damage may well be irreparable if no remedial steps are taken now. Continued occupation, economic strangulation and blockades have condemned the Palestinians to lead a subhuman life in the occupied territories. These actions by Israel have only succeeded in seriously eroding mutual confidence between the two sides and in breeding frustration. Recent events show that such a blatant disregard for human life and dignity cannot ensure security for anyone. Clearly, there is a need to prevent further deterioration of the situation. We have remained quite passive in the Council until this moment and have witnessed unmistakable signs of great instability in the region, with grave consequences for international peace and security.

Over the last two weeks, laudable efforts at mediation have been made by all sides involved. That they have not been very successful would be a fair assessment. We are therefore convinced that the Council must respond to the dire situation on the ground and be responsible for the obligations placed on it by the Charter.

What can the Council do to respond to this situation? In our view, at this hour we need to call on both sides to stop all violence forthwith and return to peaceful negotiations. Setting any kind of conditions would be tantamount to taking sides, which the Council can ill afford. It would be prudent for the Council to refer to the Mitchell Committee recommendations, which have been accepted by both sides and for which the Council has expressed its support. Both sides must start taking steps immediately for comprehensive implementation of the recommendations. Doing so will pave the way for a return to negotiations within the Middle East peace process for a final settlement of all outstanding issues on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

The draft resolution reflects all the above elements in a balanced and constructive manner. We believe that it provides us with an opportunity to demonstrate the capacity of the Council to act — and act constructively. Bangladesh therefore fully supports the resolution and will vote for it.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): The situation in the Middle East gives reason for great concern. The achievements made over the last decade are in jeopardy. The tragic and appalling events of 11 September have made progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict even more urgent. The vicious cycle of violence and terror must be stopped. We can not allow the Middle East conflict to get out of hand. The consequences would be disastrous for the Israelis as well as for the Palestinians, not to mention the region as a whole.

Norway welcomes the United States commitment to intensify its engagement in the Middle East peace process as outlined by President George W. Bush before the General Assembly and by Secretary of State Colin Powell in his statement in Kentucky. Norway strongly supports the efforts by the special envoys of the United States, the United Nations, the European Union and Russia.

Violence, terrorism and military responses have once again proved ineffective as a means of solving the Middle East conflict. Terrorism can never be justified. Terrorism must be fought; it must be eliminated. In line with international efforts, Norway urges President Arafat and the Palestinian Authority to make a 100 per cent effort in fighting terrorism. Known terrorists must be arrested and brought to justice, and more must be done to prevent new attacks.

The Palestinian Authority must renew its commitment to the ceasefire announced on 26 September and ensure full enforcement of Palestinian Authority orders regarding the ceasefire. Israel and the Palestinian Authority must resume full security cooperation under United States auspices.

At the same time, Norway urges Israel to stop its military actions against the Palestinians and to show restraint. Targeting the Palestinian police and the Palestinian administration seriously undermines the authority and the effectiveness of these same administrations. This will also negatively affect security in the long term.

President Arafat and the Palestinian Authority leaders are the elected leaders of the Palestinians. Their existence and ability to function is essential for the resumption of the peace process. Without a clear interlocutor on the Palestinian side, it is hard to see any resumption of the peace process in the foreseeable future.

Much has been said about the implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell report and the Tenet ceasefire understandings. Still, they are the most relevant tools for de-escalating the situation. Their recommendations must now be fully implemented. No further delays can be accepted. The Mitchell recommendations were devised as a package and must be regarded as such. To ensure success, any operational plan for implementation must address key security and political recommendations simultaneously.

In our view, the implementation of the Mitchell recommendations and the Tenet understandings could be facilitated if the parties were provided with support in the form of a monitoring mechanism. Norway stands ready to participate in a possible future monitoring mission should the parties agree to it.

The objectives of any new attempts to resuscitate the peace process must be made clear from the outset. Norway calls on the parties to recognize the following objectives for the final status negotiations: for the Palestinians, an end to the occupation of their territories and the establishment of a viable and democratic State in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); for the Israelis, the right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders. Only when both parties accept these goals explicitly will a resumption of final status negotiations have a chance of succeeding. The Palestinian economy is in a severe recession after more than a year of intifada and the subsequent closures of the Palestinian territory. The effects have been devastating.

In these very difficult circumstances, Norway remains committed to its role as chairman of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians. We will work together with the rest of the international community and will continue to raise funds for the Palestinian people and for the Palestinian Authority. We are, of course, also committed to continuing our bilateral programme of economic assistance to the Palestinian people.

The destiny of the Israelis and the Palestinians is indivisible. Security for the Israelis depends on security for the Palestinians, and vice versa. Peace can be achieved only through mutual compromise. The parties must recognize that the path to peace will be hard and painful but that, at the end of the tunnel, there will be an end to conflict.

The time has come for Middle East leaders to embark once again on the road to peace. Terror must end. A ceasefire must be implemented. Final status negotiations must be prepared for.

We are of the opinion that the Security Council should not be silent on the situation in the Middle East. However, in order for the Council to be able to contribute effectively to resolving the ongoing crisis, the Council should speak with one voice. We must look for ways to be supportive of the efforts on the ground by international actors to bring the peace process back on track. Norway will abstain in the vote on the draft resolution because it does not adequately respond to the need of the Council to speak with one voice in this most serious situation in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is the representative of South Africa. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): We are pleased, Sir, that you are presiding over this important meeting, and we thank you for convening it at this critical time for the Middle East. My delegation particularly appreciates that the Security Council has finally decided to address the deteriorating situation in the Middle East. The silence emanating from this Chamber was becoming very loud, particularly to those who suffer the daily violence. The fact that none of us can confidently predict the way forward in the Middle East process should not keep the Security Council from remaining engaged and from acting on its responsibility for maintaining global peace and security.

All of us are frustrated that the Middle East seems to be locked into violence on both sides — which in turn perpetuates violence. The world accepts that the parties in the Middle East that must ultimately agree in the negotiations for peace, namely the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, cannot do it

through violence. Since violence will not resolve the situation, a unilateral solution cannot be possible, and dialogue will always remain the only solution for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We call on both sides in the conflict to seize the opportunity for peace.

We are particularly pleased to speak in this debate on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its commitment to work towards a negotiated settlement. The challenge remains to make this a reality in which both sides, Israeli and Palestinian, share a common vision and are therefore able, in good faith, to discuss the most difficult of the final status issues, as equals working towards a common goal.

The recommendations of the Sharm El-Sheik Fact-Finding Committee, published in the Mitchell report, were hailed by the Israelis, the Palestinians and the world community at large, as containing acceptable measures for de-escalating conflict, building confidence and returning to the negotiating table. We believe that there is still an opportunity to return to the negotiating table.

Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace remain as internationally accepted benchmarks for the outcome of negotiations. Those resolutions enshrine an international consensus that Israel must withdraw from the Arab land occupied since the 1967 war in order for a viable, sovereign Palestinian State to come into being. The Non-Aligned Movement calls for the resumption of negotiations between the two sides within the Middle East peace process on the agreed basis, taking into consideration the previous discussions between the two sides, and it urges them to reach a final agreement.

The Non-Aligned Movement also continues to support efforts to deploy an international monitoring mechanism, which would help the parties implement the recommendations of the Mitchell report and would help to improve the situation on the ground.

In conclusion, I would like to recall that Ministers for Foreign Affairs and heads of delegation of the Non-Aligned Movement, meeting in the context of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, expressed grave concern at the severe and dangerous deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, which began on 28 September 2000. They were also concerned about the damage caused to the Middle East peace process and about the existing danger in the region, which has acquired additional and urgent dimensions in the light of the present international circumstances. They stressed the need for fresh and qualitatively new efforts to bring the Middle East peace process back to life and to bring it to a speedy and successful conclusion. In that regard, they called for concerted international input, based on international legitimacy, regarding the final outcome of the peace process, including the establishment of a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is the representative of Israel, on whom I now call.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, and to express our sincere appreciation to the representative of Jamaica for her excellent stewardship of the Security Council during the month of November.

The past two weeks have seen an incredible escalation of Palestinian terrorism against Israel which is unparalleled in more than 14 months of violence. Though one would never know it from the draft resolution before the Council, surely we are all aware of the devastating triple bombing that occurred on 1 December in a crowded pedestrian mall in the heart of Jerusalem, claiming the lives of 11 Israelis, all between the ages of 14 and 20, and wounding nearly 200 others. Barely 12 hours after that attack, a Palestinian suicide terrorist, with more than 10 kilograms of explosives strapped to his body, blew up a public bus in the northern Israeli city of Haifa, killing 15 civilians and wounding 38 others, several of them seriously. That same morning, an Israeli professor was shot and killed, and several others were wounded, by two Palestinian terrorists disguised as Israeli soldiers.

Three days later, a Palestinian terrorist blew himself up on a side street in Jerusalem, wounding two people at a nearby bus stop. Four days later, more than 40 civilians were wounded when a Palestinian suicide terrorist detonated his charges in the northern city of Haifa. Later that same day, Palestinian terrorists shot and seriously wounded an Israeli civilian after his car was ambushed near the village of Na'aleh.

The following day, Palestinian terrorists fired mortar shells into the community of Gush Katif, wounding a 3-year-old boy and his 4-year-old sister. This past Wednesday evening, Palestinian terrorists struck again when a public bus was ambushed near the community of Emmanuel. Two roadside bombs were detonated, and several terrorists opened fire, with automatic rifles and anti-tank grenades, on passengers as they fled the vehicle, as well as on ambulances, rescue workers and medical personnel who arrived at the scene. Ten Israelis were killed in that attack, and approximately 30 others were wounded. At almost precisely the same moment, Palestinian suicide bombers attacked two Israeli vehicles near the community of Neve Dekalim, wounding the four occupants.

The list goes on and on. Palestinian terrorism continues even as we speak, despite the insistence of the international community that Chairman Arafat fulfil his responsibility to fight terrorism. Even a cursory analysis of the events of the past 14 days indicates that Chairman Arafat has abjectly failed to do so.

The terrorism that has afflicted Israeli civilians is part and parcel of the fundamentalist terrorism that is now the focus of the comprehensive international campaign aimed at its eradication. The same rejectionist ideologies that have imperilled the safety and security of Israelis for decades are finally being recognized as a clear and present danger to the world order. This danger emerges from the fanatical mindset that justifies any and all means to achieve its ends. It makes no distinction among its targets. It is remorseless and unforgiving in its brutality and must be condemned and fought unequivocally, without reservations, without hesitation and without fear.

Unfortunately, there are those who refuse to acknowledge that Palestinians who target innocent Israelis are, in fact, terrorists. They refer to the so-called cycle of violence, to the poverty and despair of the Palestinian population, and even bestow the noble title of "freedom fighter" on those who kill children.

This notion is as repulsive as it is mistaken. There is no cycle of violence in the Middle East in the manner in which that term is usually understood. There is no equivalent between those who perpetrate terror and those who fight it.

For Israel, every death of a civilian is a tragic consequence in a conflict in which civilians have been used by terrorists as human shields. For the Palestinian terrorists, however, civilians are the target, and each civilian casualty is the benchmark of a successful operation.

Israel recognizes, and has repeatedly expressed its sympathy for, the unfortunate deaths of Palestinian civilians and for the Palestinian populations that must endure the precautionary security measures foisted upon Israel by the inaction of the Palestinian leadership. But while Israel considers the death of any civilian, whether Israeli or Palestinian, to be tragic, for the Palestinian terrorist, these deaths are deliberate, premeditated and desired.

For Palestinian terrorists, every Israeli casualty is a matter of pride, a religious obligation and an occasion for celebration. Palestinian terrorists routinely produce videotapes prior to embarking on a murderous rampage in which they speak with evident pleasure of their desire to kill as many men, women and children as possible. These videos are virtually indistinguishable from that of another notorious terrorist, who, in a videotape with which we are all by now familiar, rejoiced over the murders of thousands of Americans in New York; Washington, D.C.; and Pennsylvania.

When Mr. Arafat announced his historic decision, in September 1993, to part ways with his terrorist past, he showed no confusion over who was a terrorist. He demonstrated a perfectly clear understanding of the fact that the murders he himself had orchestrated in the name of the Palestine Liberation Organization were the very terrorist tactics that he was renouncing. Increasingly, however, we now hear representatives of the Palestinian Authority and others attempt to justify the unjustifiable and to distinguish between one kind of terror and another, as evidenced by their conspicuous refusal to employ the term "terrorism" when referring to attacks on Israeli civilians. But if Palestinian terrorism is truly a legitimate method of liberation, why, then, did Chairman Arafat even make a pretence, back in 1993, of rejecting it? And if it is not, then on what basis is Israel to be condemned for taking action to prevent it?

We must be clear. There is no cause so just, no grievance so severe, no objective so noble that it can justify killing innocent civilians. Terrorism must be defined by what one does, not by what one does it for.

By refusing to condemn terrorist murder whenever and wherever it exists, we only empower extremists. We legitimize those who seek to achieve their goals through violence and terror at the expense of leaders willing to resolve disputes through peaceful dialogue. If the international community tolerates any act of terrorism, if it turns a blind eye to it, it renders irrelevant the very methods it has championed for the peaceful resolution of disputes.

In the Palestinian case, the grievance that is cited is that of occupation, and the objective ascribed to the terrorist murderers is that of liberation. Yet even if one were to accept the ludicrous notion that occupation is a legitimate basis for killing innocent civilians, the Palestinians still would not qualify. The Palestinians have sought to portray Israeli occupation as an outgrowth of a type of colonial quest for power and domination over another people. And yet the historical record demonstrably asserts the contrary.

Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza was the result of a war in which Israel's very existence was threatened by the combined armies of several Arab nations. The hostilities of 1967 were a war imposed upon Israel, not a war undertaken in order to conquer new territory and subjugate its people. The Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza is a result not of Israeli aggression, but of Israeli self-defence.

More recently, Israel has transferred sufficient territory to the Palestinians that now the overwhelming majority of Palestinians live under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. In July 2000, at the Camp David Summit, Israel was prepared to go even further, extending an offer that would have transferred virtually all of the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinians, an offer that numerous observers have described as fair and generous. The Palestinians not only spurned that offer, they launched a terrorist war that continues to this very day.

Surely the tired notion that occupation is the root of this conflict cannot withstand the forces of history and common sense. And even more surely, it in no way justifies the unconscionable murders of innocent Israeli civilians.

What we are witnessing today in the Middle East is the continuation of a struggle begun not in 1967, but in 1948, when members of the League of Arab States collectively rejected General Assembly partition resolution 181 (II) and launched a war to eliminate the Jewish State. Every day that terrorism threatens civilians simply because they are Israeli; every day that the Jewish right to self-determination is equated with racism; every day that Palestinian incitement encourages hatred of the Jewish people, Israelis become further convinced that this is a conflict not about occupation, but about our legitimacy and our right to exist.

The obstacle to peace in the Middle East is not occupation — an occupation that Israel never wanted and that it has gone to great lengths to bring to an end. The primary obstacle to peace and to a negotiated settlement between our peoples is the continuing murder of civilians and the abhorrent attempts to justify those murders by the Palestinian leadership. There is absolutely no alternative to the immediate arrest of Palestinian terrorists, the dismantling of their infrastructure and putting an end to officially sanctioned incitement and demonization.

Israel had hoped that the mounting international pressure on Mr. Arafat would finally mobilize him to act. We were cautiously optimistic that, following the carnage in Jerusalem and Haifa, he had finally been made to realize that the only hope for his people and the survival of his leadership was to act, and to act quickly.

Unfortunately, reports today indicate that Mr. Arafat has officially suspended his campaign against terrorists — if it ever really existed to begin with. By this statement, Mr. Arafat has made it clear that he has no intention of ending the violence, taking action against terrorists or bringing himself into accord with the will of the international community, the principles of international law and the standards of international legitimacy. It further substantiates the fact that, while the Palestinians claim to have made a strategic choice for peace, they have made a tactical choice for terrorism. By his statement and his pattern of action — or, more precisely, his inaction — Mr. Arafat is reinforcing his reputation as an unworthy and unreliable leader who is leading his people to yet another catastrophe.

I will not deny that the situation we are facing is as bleak as it is dangerous. But all is not lost. There is an ever-diminishing window of opportunity for us to reverse the descent into hopeless violence if the Council acts prudently today. Unfortunately, the draft resolution before us does not further that objective.

While serious international efforts are under way to bring an end to the Palestinian terrorist campaign, a draft resolution which fails to recognize that terror as the primary obstacle to peace and security in the region sends a misleading and dangerous message. At a time when Israeli civilians are being continuously targeted, the failure to condemn such actions and call in clear terms for Palestinian leadership to combat that terror, as it is morally and legally obligated to do, amounts to a reward for violence and an indirect endorsement of the inaction of the Palestinian Authority.

After all that has passed, is this draft resolution really the message the Council wants to send? Does the carnage of the past 14 months not deserve more than the cursory mention of terrorism?

It is my hope that Council members will find it within themselves to deal honestly with the situation before us. But as it stands, the draft is unbalanced and counterproductive and, quite frankly, out of touch with the reality in the region, in which innocent Israeli civilians are being targeted day after day, precisely because they are innocent. As it stands, the draft resolution cannot help the parties return to the negotiating table, which is the only place — as the parties themselves have acknowledged — where outstanding issues can be resolved.

Israel is as committed to combating terrorism as it is to the pursuit of peace through a process of dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation with our Palestinian neighbours. We are committed to the implementation of the Mitchell report, which calls first and foremost for a complete and unconditional cessation of violence; we are committed to implementing the confidence-building measures detailed in the Mitchell report; and we are committed to engaging once again in substantial peace negotiations with the Palestinians aimed at achieving a just and lasting resolution to the conflict between our peoples, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

But we cannot do it alone. We cannot take actions towards these ends while our citizens are being gunned down at will. We cannot take action without reciprocal Palestinian action. We cannot be the lone voice calling for peace and reconciliation while terror, hatred and incitement continue to emanate from the other side.

We call upon the Palestinian people to end the litany of historic opportunities missed by their leader and to join us in the historic endeavour to reaffirm, not just in word but also in deed, their commitment to non-violence and direct bilateral negotiations. In this way, and only in this way, can we clear the path for negotiations and finally put to rest the tragic and painful conflict that both peoples have endured for so long.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Israel for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Mr. Papa Louis Fall. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fall: I would like to wish you every success in your endeavours, Mr. President, and to congratulate you warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and on the outstanding manner in which you, Ambassador Ouane, Permanent Representative of Mali, are guiding its work. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Mignonette Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, who guided the work of the Council in exemplary fashion last month.

Of course, I am deeply indebted to you, Sir, and to your colleagues on the Security Council, for having so generously given the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People the opportunity to address the Council, through me, in this important debate.

This debate has been made necessary by an explosive situation that has followed the exacerbation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem — a perverse sequence of indiscriminate or targeted assassinations, outbursts of anger and extreme and disproportionate retaliatory measures on the part of the Israeli troops, and almost desperate retaliatory actions, to say nothing of heinous acts of opportunism on the part of well-known unrepentant extremists.

The Council will not be surprised to hear that our Committee is particularly disquieted, given the extreme and ruthless measures taken by the occupation authorities — measures that have been referred to by earlier speakers, and I do not need to recall them. These measures negate, in effect, the agreements that were entered into by both parties. This inflicts upon the

long-suffering Palestinian people new suffering and unacceptable collective sanctions.

Instead of pacifying the situation and creating a climate conducive to the implementation of the Mitchell report and Tenet document, these vengeful acts that have caused so many deaths and massive destruction of property could, if we are not careful, degenerate into a disastrous confrontation with unpredictable consequences for the region and the world at large.

Even worse, the Israeli Government disregards the Palestinian Authority's efforts to stop the violence and punish those who perpetrate violent acts. Our Committee strongly condemns such acts, regardless of whether they are committed by the Palestinian or the Israeli side. Our Committee has noticed that at times, the Israeli Government has wanted to exploit a tragic international situation, and that it tried to capitalize on the legitimate emotion generated by the tragic events that the people of the United States and the community of nations lived through recently.

Mr. President, you and the other members of the Security Council will acknowledge that frustration, exasperation and rage are looming. The situation has become unacceptable and so explosive that the international community is duty-bound to do something to mitigate or banish the horrible consequences of a tragedy that is all too well known.

Under the circumstances, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People urgently calls for the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied Palestinian territories and the immediate cessation of all acts of violence and provocation, together with the deployment of a protection or observation force in the area. We call for respect for the principles enshrined in the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and respect for the provisions of the relevant United Nations resolutions. Those principles that have been reasserted in the Declaration of the Conference of the High Contracting Parties, convened in Geneva on 5 December this year. We also demand a resumption of the peace negotiations according to the timetable already agreed, in accordance with the recommendations of the Mitchell report and the Tenet document, together with the implementation of a mechanism of supervision.

Finally, we ask that a just and durable overall settlement be arrived at in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) of the Security Council, in keeping with the principle of land for peace, as reaffirmed in resolution 56/36 of the General Assembly, adopted only a few days ago. The Committee of which I am Chairman welcomes the most recent statement made by the representative of Israel regarding his commitment to peace and a resumption of the peace negotiations, and also that Israel will comply with the implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) of the Security Council.

This situation tests the credibility of the Security Council, as well as of the General Assembly, because Israeli-Arab relations stumble constantly on the question of Palestine. The fact that this long-standing issue is central to any lasting solution to the Middle East problem necessitates the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Our Committee has said many times that peace cannot thrive, nor can there by any development, in the region as long as Palestinians and Israelis, who are destined to live together, fail to develop relations of trust as sovereign States within secure and internationally guaranteed borders. The State of Israel and the future State of Palestine each has a right to existence, peace and development in dignity and security.

In the wake of statements made earlier by the representatives of Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia and others, our Committee has just stated its position, which flows directly from the position of the General Assembly regarding the explosive situation on the ground and its serious threat to international peace and security. It is growing late, and at a time when everyone is justifiably questioning the future of the peace process, the Council is duty-bound to shoulder its responsibility — nothing more and nothing less, without procrastinating — to send a clear message and adopt concrete and decisive measures dictated by the urgency of the circumstances.

It is growing late, and this Council has no alternative but to act with diligence, lucidity and firmness, but also with a keen sense of discernment, by adopting unanimously the draft resolution presented by Tunisia and Egypt. The principles and philosophy of that draft resolution are in accord with the Promethean vision and objectives developed by American Secretary

of State Colin Powell in his famous Louisville statement. This must be done before the advocates of violence, hatred and conflagration come together in a league of extremism of all stripes to exploit the current situation to try to promote their dark doctrine and proceed with their lethal designs, at the expense of the humanistic brotherhood of civilizations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Fall for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Once again, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has brought us to the Security Council. This is a real war in which an occupying army, equipped with weapons of the latest technology, is decimating a heroic and defenceless people. The root cause of this situation is to be found in Israel's ongoing challenge of and non-compliance with the numerous resolutions of the General Assembly, this Council and other United Nations bodies, aimed at achieving a definitive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question and, by extension, that of the entire Middle East.

The reason why this disdain can be expressed with absolute impunity lies in the active support of the United States for Israel's policy. Without the United States' financial support and provision of the aircraft, helicopters and missiles with which Palestinian civilians are being killed, this war would not be taking place. Without the tragic paradox by which a permanent member of the Council can, through its veto, prevent the Security Council from acting to stop this war, end the occupation that underlies it and protect the Palestinian people through the deployment of an international force, this meeting would not be taking place. The recent history of the Middle East would be different without the 23 public vetoes that have been exercised by the United States, its numerous threats to use the veto with which it has paralysed the Council and the intense pressure it exerts in this area.

The war against Palestinian civilians and the unbridled State terrorism carried out by Israel, including extrajudicial executions, must cease immediately. The flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to life, and of international humanitarian law must be halted. Repression, torture and the destruction of homes must stop. The illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories must end.

Innocent Israeli civilians are also the unfortunate victims of this spiral of violence and terror brought on by the policies of their Government. Once again, we energetically condemn the suicide bombings, as well as any terrorist act in any form, wherever and by whomever it may be committed. However, these acts must not be used as a pretext to question the legitimacy of the struggle of the Palestinian people against foreign occupation.

Israel must comply with all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Israel must forthwith shoulder its obligations and responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Israel must immediately resume negotiations with the Palestinian Authority.

The Security Council must urgently deploy an international observer force to protect Palestinian civilians and the United Nations must assume a real and effective role in ensuring impartiality in the negotiations. The very least the Council can do tonight, given the extreme gravity of the current circumstances, is to adopt the draft resolution submitted by Tunisia and Egypt. As has been said, veto number 24 will be exercised this morning.

Cuba reaffirms its solidarity with Palestine in its struggle to establish an independent and sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and for the return of all occupied Arab territories.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): Due to the lateness of the hour, I shall dispense with the usual complimentary remarks.

Let me, however, thank you, Sir, for convening this open meeting of the Security Council to consider the current grave and tragic situation in Palestine. The brutal military and other actions taken by the Israeli Government against the Palestinian National Authority

and President Yasser Arafat himself must not be allowed to continue. These actions are brazen acts of aggression and intimidation. They are short-sighted and intended to serve only the short-term security and tactical interests of the Government of Mr. Sharon, whose only interest is to cow the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian people into submission. The undermining of the Palestinian Authority and of President Arafat's personal authority and prestige carries with it grave risks of further destabilizing the region, with all their political and security implications.

It is clear to all, except to Mr. Sharon and his supporters, that the role of the Palestinian Authority and of President Arafat himself continues to be indispensable to the peace process, particularly at this critical juncture. Mr. Sharon's handling of the situation has sent the Middle East crisis spinning almost out of control. It is incumbent upon the international community, and on this Council in particular, to restrain Mr. Sharon and to pull him back from the brink of the precipice. Non-action by this Council will send the wrong signal to Mr. Sharon, who will be emboldened to take whatever further measures he wishes, with impunity. The course of action pursued by Mr. Sharon is a dangerous one and, if not checked, will plunge the region into an upheaval that we shall all regret.

It is therefore the responsibility of this Council to act decisively to stop this dangerous trend. The responsibility lies here, in this Council, not elsewhere. We are not here to isolate Israel; we are here to make it realize the folly of its policies and do the right thing.

As a member of this Council, Malaysia strongly supported the idea of a United Nations peacekeeping or protection force as the most effective mechanism to stop or at least minimize the violence. We believe that, had such a force or international presence been established, the current spiral of violence would have been greatly curbed and the crisis better managed, thereby improving the chances of reviving the peace process. While the current draft resolution merely calls for the establishment of a "monitoring presence" to help the parties implement the recommendations of the report of the Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, or the Mitchell report, my delegation considers that to be a concrete and positive step in the effort to de-escalate the violence and, hopefully, to pave the way to bringing the peace process back on track. The reasons given by Israel for why it cannot accept these proposals are disingenuous and unconvincing.

Peace in West Asia, or the Middle East, is in the interest of all of us, as it is in the interests of the peoples of the region, Arabs and Jews alike. It must therefore be pursued and promoted, not shunned, frustrated or impeded by policies that are only intended to provoke and inflame. Since the people of Israel have a big stake in ensuring that the peace process is revived, they should encourage their Government to pursue peace and not take further military actions of provocation and confrontation. They must realize that only a just and comprehensive peace with the Palestinians and their Arabs neighbours, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), would guarantee their future security and stability, not a continuing policy of hostility and confrontation. It is our hope that countries with influence in the region will spare no effort in encouraging Israel to return to the peace process, as it is the only viable option, now and in the future.

Malaysia is encouraged by recent remarks made by President George Bush of the United States, as well as by Secretary of State Colin Powell, on the Palestinian issue and the general recognition that at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the problem of the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands. We believe that further evolution of the position of the United States in the right direction would be a positive and significant contribution towards resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, early and tangible steps must be taken to give substance to these policy statements.

We strongly believe that the cause of peace would be better served if friends of Israel, particularly the United States, used their close relationship with Israel to moderate its policies and practices against the Palestinians and influence it to manifest greater commitment to the peace process, and not condone its hostile and aggressive behaviour.

Israel has tried to equate the United States-led efforts to combat international terrorists that had brutally attacked the United States with Israel's problem in handling terrorist acts on its own soil and in the territories under its illegal occupation, including Jerusalem. The two situations are not the same. There are fundamental differences between them, and some

of these were just mentioned by the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

While there can be no justification for the taking of innocent lives — and we condemn these acts — we must pause to fathom the reasons why these violent acts continue to be carried out by people who are prepared to sacrifice their lives for the cause they believe in. How does one stop individuals from blowing themselves up for a cause larger than themselves? Unless this issue is squarely addressed and addressed early, there is little hope of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict in the foreseeable future.

The grave situation in Palestine was discussed at the recent special ministerial meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Doha, Qatar, in which some 51 foreign ministers and representatives of Muslim countries participated. It is deeply regrettable that President Yasser Arafat could not attend the meeting, as Israeli occupation forces prevented him from leaving for Doha to address the Conference. That meeting decided, among other things, to establish a special ministerial committee that has been tasked with making contacts with the United States, the Russian Federation and the European Union for the purpose of seeking international support for the immediate halt to Israeli aggression and plans to dismantle the Palestinian Authority and for the dispatch of international observers to protect the Palestinian people. In carrying out its assigned tasks, the ministerial mission looks forward to the positive response of their interlocutors.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Canada. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada): I welcome this opportunity to speak in this debate. Since September 2000 the world has watched the violent degradation of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians with disbelief and consternation and growing horror. One thousand are dead and thousands more scarred and maimed for life. Bitterness, suspicion and hostility are widespread, where once the prospect of peace permitted a cautious optimism and confidence in the future.

The peace process set in motion at Madrid 10 years ago is now feared by some to be dead. It is certainly in failing health, and we need to exercise our best efforts to revive it. The immediate cessation of all acts of violence, provocation and destruction is essential. We have seen and we deplore the logic of violence that gradually undermines the proponents of peace, moderation and good will and fortifies the advocates of extremism.

After 15 months of a cycle of armed intifada, terrorism and violent repression, the space for moderation has been drastically and dangerously reduced. To bring an end to the violence, the first step is to condemn terrorism and its practitioners loudly and unequivocally. As my Foreign Minister, John Manley, said on Thursday, Canada fully supports Israel's right to security and understands Israel's need to defend itself against terrorist attacks.

By their criminal acts, indiscriminate violence and suicide bombings, the terrorists have undermined confidence that peace and security are possible, and they have done nothing to persuade others to support their cause. Quite the reverse; they have undermined the proponents of the peace process. Members of the Palestinian Authority know this to be true. They and all Palestinians must now do all in their power to end the violence and dismantle the terrorist networks. In so doing, they will enhance — not diminish — their legitimacy.

At the same time, the use of force and the absence of political engagement also undermine confidence in the search for peace and reinforce extremist views. Pursuit of known terrorists is entirely justifiable. However, the excessive use of force and the targeting of infrastructure as a quid pro quo for terrorism are taking a heavy toll not only in innocent unarmed bystanders, but also in the qualities of reason, moderation and good will, which the pursuit of peace needs now more urgently than ever.

We call upon the two sides to start immediately on the speedy implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell report. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority accepted this report when it appeared last May. In doing so, they recognized that the report provided a road map for setting the peace process back on course. This is as true now in December as it was in May because the required elements of a stable peace settlement are the same as they have always been.

Continued terrorist outrages and attacks on civilians have further undermined confidence since the Mitchell report appeared. The long-term objective remains the same, and we, the members of the international community, must do our utmost to help persuade the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority to resume discussion and cooperation. Peace talks require partners. As Prime Minister Chrétien said on Thursday, Canada will continue to deal with the Palestinian Authority as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

A monitoring mechanism agreed to by both sides could assist in building the confidence necessary to bring the parties back to negotiations and ultimately to a peace settlement. The international community recognizes the right of Israelis to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

The international community recognizes a need for the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, which can be brought about through those negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, which we all agree here tonight must be resumed without delay. The international community ardently desires the realization of both of these objectives and supports the efforts of the United Nations and others to help restart the peace process. Canada now, as in the past, is willing and able to support efforts to resolve this conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is the representative of Brazil. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to participate in the debate on the situation in the Middle East, particularly the occupied Palestinian territories. The debate today occurs in the wake of a new wave of violence, which continues to distance the world from the goal of a peaceful and prosperous Middle East. No one can be indifferent to the sad events and to the escalation of the confrontations in the Middle East. Peace must not elude us. Peace should not be an unachievable goal for Israelis and Palestinians. The international community, with a sense of urgency, has a responsibility to help both parties to find a solution to this long and tragic conflict.

We extend to the families of the victims, as well as to the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, our deepest condolences for the loss of life and the pain inflicted on countless civilians.

Brazil deplores and vigorously condemns the violent terrorist acts that took place in the region recently, which caused dozens of fatalities and hundreds of injuries. In the same vein, we deplore the attacks by Israeli forces on civilian targets in the West Bank, which result in civilian Palestinian casualties.

In repudiating those acts and measures, the Brazilian Government reaffirms its conviction that violence on both sides leads only to a further deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, adding to the already dangerous level of hostility and intolerance between Israelis and Palestinians. Acts of violence will not further anyone's cause. The only way to produce mutually beneficial and lasting results is through negotiation, constructive dialogue and respect for agreements and for Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Reconciliation should be achieved through the mechanisms for the peaceful solution of disputes accepted by the international community. Dialogue and negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority should be urgently resumed. It is not necessary to stress that the Palestinian Authority is the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Brazil underlines the importance of the safety of all civilians in the Middle East, the protection of human rights, respect for cultural and religious values and symbols, and progress, while cooperation is being developed among all peoples of the region. It is especially relevant that the parties embrace tolerance as their main guiding principle. In line with the Rio Group statement issued during the ministerial week of the General Assembly, we call on the parties to consider all proposals that may lead to the resumption of peace negotiations and to adhere to the peace initiatives offered by the international community, in particular, as regards the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Mitchell report.

Once again, Brazil exhorts the parties involved to exert all possible efforts to cease the spiral of violence. We join the international community and the United Nations in their determination not to allow extremist actions of any nation to prevent the resumption of the peace process.

Ever since this question was placed under the aegis of the United Nations, Brazil has consistently advocated a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict. At the General Assembly's 44th meeting, in the opening statement of the general debate last month, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso renewed our commitment to a balanced and just solution to the question of Palestine and underlined that

> "Just as it supported the creation of the State of Israel, Brazil today calls for concrete measures towards the setting up of a Palestinian State that is democratic, united and economically viable.
>
> "The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and respect for the existence of Israel as a sovereign, free and secure State are essential if the Middle East is to rebuild its future and peace.
>
> "This is a moral debt owed by the United Nations. It is a task that must not be postponed."

All the peoples of the region deserve an environment of political freedom, peace and stability, in which they can concentrate their efforts on prosperity and social and economic development. For this to happen — the message of this meeting is clear — it is necessary that tolerance prevail over violence and that political dialogue and a true wish for reconciliation prevail over extremist attitudes.

The United Nations, especially the Security Council, is the fundamental instrument of the international community for resolving conflicts. Its role should be strengthened in times of crisis. In this sense, we reaffirm our support for the work of the Secretary-General and his representative in the Middle East on the question of Palestine. We hope this meeting of the Security Council will prove to be a valid step in the efforts for the achievement of peace in the Middle East. We also hope that in the future the Council will be able to fully exercise its responsibilities on this question.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and make his statement.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, let me first express my full confidence in your leadership and ability to steer the deliberations in the Council in the month of December. I also wish to thank you for convening this important and timely meeting on the question of Palestine.

In recent days, the Israeli regime, in pursuit of its bloody campaign and racist and aggressive policy, has been employing more vicious measures against the defenceless Palestinian people. It has once again reacted excessively and disproportionately in the occupied territories, killing and injuring dozens of civilians. The Israelis have further escalated their inhumane practice of repression against the Palestinian people in full disregard for any established humane standards against civilians.

The targeted assassination by Israelis of a Palestinian on 23 November lies at the origin of the recent cycle of violence. That criminal act was committed on the eve of intended new efforts by Western envoys and also followed statements by a number of Western countries that might provide new opportunities for addressing the flagrant injustice the Palestinian people have faced for decades.

Familiar with the pattern of actions and aware of the possible reaction, the Zionist officials authorized these targeted killings, knowing that they would disrupt the new efforts that could lead to the easing of the tension in the region. We believe that the recent escalation of violence in the occupied territories should be seen from this point of view, and the Israeli Government should be held fully responsible for the new cycle of violence.

There should be no doubt that the Israeli campaign of extrajudicial killing of Palestinians on the basis of hit lists is a flagrant violation of key tenets of natural justice and provisions of international humanitarian law. The deeds and words of the Israeli leadership made it obvious that extrajudicial executions have become part of the regime's policy. That policy amounts to organized acts of terrorism by a government, and the international community should not turn a blind eye to it. It is very unfortunate that those Governments that criticize the Palestinians and hold them responsible for the ongoing violence in the area ignore the crimes perpetrated by the Israelis and do nothing to stop them.

Occupation lies at the very origin of the Palestinian conflict and the overall tension and instability in the Middle East. The shocking developments of the past few months brought closer into view the fact that, unless the principal cause of

conflict is effectively addressed, the crisis will never subside. Therefore, no link whatsoever can be established between terrorism and the right of the Palestinian people to resist Israeli aggression and occupation, considered to be a legitimate right ensured by international laws and conventions.

We reject the contention that the Israeli aggression is in self-defence. We further reject the policies of unlimited support extended to Israel. As to the real intention of the Israeli regime, it is significant that the Israelis continue to reject the call for a freeze on all settlement construction activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The international community in general, and the Islamic world in particular, are deeply concerned about the ongoing atrocities committed by Israeli troops. Undoubtedly, these latest acts by Israel are likely to further exacerbate the Middle East crisis unless the international community and the United Nations intervene immediately to stop the Israeli armed forces' brutal campaign against civilians.

There is no doubt that the Security Council in particular is expected to act appropriately with a view to putting an end to violations by the occupying power and paving the way for bringing those who are responsible to justice. Several times in the past, the Council was called upon to shoulder its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by putting an end to the inhuman and aggressive acts of the Israeli regime. Regrettably, however, the exercise or the threat of exercise of the veto has so far prevented the Council from discharging its constitutional responsibility in this crucial issue and thus has raised profound international disappointment. Undoubtedly, the Council's inaction emboldens Israel to defy the wishes of the international community reflected, inter alia, in numerous General Assembly resolutions.

Recent events have further demonstrated the need for an international intervention, protection and observer force to be established by the Council with a view to protecting defenceless Palestinian civilians from ever-increasing atrocities at the hands of the Israelis. The veto last March of a draft resolution to authorize the establishment of such a United Nations observer force proved to be a disservice to the volatile situation in the area. The presence of such a force on the ground could have forestalled more violence and bloodshed and could have saved many precious lives.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I wish to thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Belgium. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and make his statement.

Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium) *(spoke in French)*: I have asked to address the Council as the current holder of the presidency of the European Union, which is very concerned by the gravity of the situation in the Middle East. We spare no effort in trying to contribute to reducing the violence.

Last Monday, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Union reiterated their demands very clearly, as addressed to the parties: for the Palestine Authority, the dismantling of the Islamic Jihad and Hamas networks, including the arrest and prosecution of all of the suspects and a public appeal for an end to the armed intifada; and for the Israeli Government, the withdrawal of its military forces, the end of extrajudicial killings, the lifting of the blockade and all restrictions imposed upon the Palestinian people and a freeze of the settlements. The implementation of these demands calls for committed action on the part of the Palestine Authority and on the part of Israel.

The heads of States and Governments of the European Union are at present meeting in Laeken, and yesterday and today they have been discussing the issue with which we are concerned. They will issue a major statement in this regard in a few hours.

The extreme gravity of the situation compels each of us to face our responsibility squarely. Putting an end to violence is a must. Peace can be based only on the reaffirmation and full recognition of the irrevocable right of Israel to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, and, on the other hand, on the establishment of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian State and an end to the occupation of Palestinian territories.

To eradicate terrorism and to build peace, Israel needs a partner, and that partner can only be the Palestine Authority and its elected President, Yasser Arafat. Any attempts to weaken or discredit them are contrary to peace and undermine any attempt to fight terrorism. The Israeli Government has to put an end to

its military operations against the Palestinian people and the Palestine Authority, and this also encompasses the actions against the installations of the Palestine Authority.

The European Union reiterates its call upon the Palestine Authority to spare no efforts to prevent acts of terrorism.

The forthwith implementation of the Tenet plan for a ceasefire and the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee remain the way to achieve a resumption of political dialogue. The European Union is convinced that the establishment of an impartial monitoring mechanism would be of service to both parties, and we are quite prepared to take an active part in the establishment of such machinery.

The European Union also attaches great importance to an economic recovery programme for Palestine. That would be a way of encouraging peace. The European Union will continue its efforts so that two States — Palestine and Israel — will be able to live side by side in peace and security.

The President *(spoke in French)*: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Levitte (France) *(spoke in French)*: As each day passes, the Middle East is drawn deeper and deeper into a tragic cycle of violence, terrorism and destruction, the victims of which are the civilian Palestinian and Israeli populations.

Given the extreme gravity of the situation, the heads of State and Government of the European Union, meeting in Laeken, will issue in a few hours a statement that will clearly and forcefully underscore the position of the 15 member States.

The Security Council, for its part, could not remain silent. At the close of this debate, the Security Council is called upon to decide on a draft resolution wherein a solemn appeal is made to both parties to put an end to violence and to resume the path of negotiation.

The draft resolution that we are going to vote on takes into account the concerns of France — a clear, unequivocal condemnation of all acts of terrorism, in particular those targeting civilians; a condemnation of extrajudiciary killings and the excessive use of force; an appeal for the immediate cessation of all acts of violence, provocation and destruction; an appeal for the immediate and full implementation of the recommendations contained in the Mitchell report, and in that framework an encouragement to the parties concerned to establish a monitoring mechanism; and a call for the resumption of negotiations with a view to achieving a peace agreement based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

As far as France is concerned, this settlement must be based, on the one hand, on the reaffirmation and full recognition of Israel's irrevocable right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, and, on the other hand, on the establishment of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian State, and this means the end of the occupation of Palestinian territories.

To negotiate such a political settlement, eradicate terrorism and build peace, Israel needs the indispensable partner, the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority must be preserved. This is the last point stressed, quite rightly so, in the draft resolution before this Council.

Because this text indicates a clear road — the only possible one, really — and because it is a balanced text, France will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): At this critical juncture in the Middle East peace process, when trust has broken down, when a corrosive cycle of violence in the region at times appears to be almost out of control, when a political settlement seems ever more elusive, it is more than ever necessary for the international community to recall to the parties the commitments they made at the outset of the peace process. My delegation therefore welcomes this Council debate today.

My delegation fully supports the comments made by the representative of Belgium in its capacity in the presidency of the European Union.

Ireland considers there is a clear route back to the peace process through the Tenet plan and the full implementation of the recommendations of the

Mitchell report. We urge the parties to bring an end to all acts of violence and provocation and to return as quickly as possible to the path of negotiations based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

My authorities have given very careful consideration to the draft resolution before us. We welcome the amendments that the sponsors have made to the text.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Mr. Brian Cowen, has condemned in the strongest terms the recent appalling acts of terrorism carried out against innocent Israeli civilians, as well as acts of reprisal that have caused the deaths of many innocent Palestinian civilians. Ireland considers that the terrorist networks within Hamas and Islamic Jihad must be dismantled.

My delegation recognizes that the current impasse has deep roots, including not only reprehensible acts of terrorism, but at the same time excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings and attacks by Israel on the institutions of the Palestinian Authority, its interlocutor in the peace process. There has also been the corrosive effect of Israeli settlements on the peace process, carried out under successive Israeli Governments.

The draft resolution before us demands an immediate cessation of all acts of violence, provocation and destruction. It specifically condemns all acts of terror, in particular those targeting civilians. The draft resolution also calls for the immediate implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell report and for a resumption of negotiations. It encourages all concerned to establish a monitoring mechanism to help the parties implement the Mitchell recommendations. Ireland has long believed that such a mechanism, under terms agreed by both sides, would be helpful in the restoration of confidence necessary for a smooth resumption of negotiations.

We would have wished it to be possible for the Council to speak with one voice on the issues before us today. On balance, however, Ireland believes that the draft resolution before us is deserving of support as an expression of the Council's deep concern at the grave situation that now exists in the region. For this reason we intend to vote for the draft resolution.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I will now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Mali.

Mali will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us. This decision is based on our conviction that the Security Council has an essential role to play, given the serious situation in Palestine. This situation, characterized by unbridled violence, is ongoing and is worsening daily. Our Council can no longer remain silent; it must take appropriate measures to face this situation. In the view of my delegation, the draft resolution on which we will take a decision will be a major contribution.

In addition, I would say that Mali is deeply committed to the pursuit of the peace process. In that perspective we feel that the United Nations must continue to shoulder its standing responsibility to ensure a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. My delegation reiterates its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Special Coordinator for the peace process in the Middle East with the parties and those in charge in the region.

As for the Security Council, it must make its contribution to improving the present situation by taking the necessary measures to assist both parties to overcome this present tragedy and to resume negotiations in order to find a final agreement on all the problems on the basis of previous agreements and on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). My delegation feels that the majority of delegations have found this text to be objective, balanced and well measured. Unfortunately, the Council has not arrived at a consensus on this.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2001/1199.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bangladesh, China, Colombia, France, Ireland, Jamaica, Mali, Mauritius, Russian Federation, Singapore, Tunisia, Ukraine.

Against:

United States of America.

Abstaining:

Norway, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The President *(spoke in French)*: The result of the voting is as follows: 12 votes in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing the negative vote of a permanent member of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers left on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 2 a.m. on Saturday, 15 December.